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Dear Gene and Sunny:

Your much appreciated card arrived last week and I can only say that yours has been addressed for days, waiting for the addition of this note. I know that I should have written long ago, and you have been in my thoughts so often, but I do not seem to be able to throw off certain feelings of depression and disappointment, etc. in the days as they pass. However, you do mean so very much to me and have been such a tower of strength and haven for me, I hope you will forgive my seeming lack of appreciation.

Without you and Bill Kosmas, I wonder what might have happened to me this year. The fact that the church was almost forced into the settlement they made, with prodding by Bill to extend the salary payments up until May 1st, and then the generous continuance of something less than that until I am 62, at least eases my mind most of the time about paying my rent and other bills. I have about sixteen pupils who are regular, and a few who drift in from time to time. I am so grateful for this many, as they bring into my apartment a feeling of life and usefulness that is not always present in my thinking. I do miss my conducting terrificly and especially now at Christmas, with carols and Messiah, etc., but I am grateful, too, that I do not have to work as hard as in the past at this time of year. Almost every Christmas the work became so intense that by Jan. 1st I was hardly aware of having had any spirit of Christmas or anything else but just drive, drive, drive to prepare all the music people seem to want and need. Yesterday afternoon, Anna and I went down to St. George's church for the carol service, as Moses Jenkins, my negro tenor, was soloing in a new English cantata for women's voices, tenor and small orchestra, and afterwards we spoke to the organist and director, and his first words were: "Aren't you glad to be out of it?". Well, it is a hard question to answer, but I suppose I do know that I am blessed and being looked after by the Creator, even tho' I would badger Him into doing things my way most of the time. I am not so old that I do not feel the need to be used and to feel that I am still creative in the music field.

I have had mostly negative replies from agencies and colleges, and one came last week from a Chicago agency, refusing my registration fee and saying few colleges want anyone over 45 and I lacked a doctor's degree. I should think that the field of voice teaching and conducting and music history would not need a doctor's degree, but experience of the work, and that 45 may be a dead-line for science or history or math but that voice teaching hardly will influence the course of the moon shots and settling the gold standard problems.

I have had two interviews with Cook's, about guiding for next summer and perhaps even next year. The first one was for tours

into Canada, Nova Scotia, and New England, covering mainly May to Oct., and as I have more free time than school.teachers, the man thought I might prove very useful. The second interview was for winter cruises, and tho' I have not done the So. Am., Caribbean, Medit. areas, he was impressed with the sort of travel I have done and my general educational background. I have not replied to the second man, as I am able to make as much teaching at the moment as they could pay, and it would be foolish for me to throw out my pupils just to take on something much more demanding physically and less remunerative. I am waiting also to hear from BROWNELL, for whom I have done some guiding, as their trips to Europe are very special and much more to my liking than Nova Scotia, etc. I expect to hear from them by Feb., so will still have time to contact Cook's on their summer tours if it does not work out.

Anna and I stay busy with concerts and plays, and she sees to it that I don't get too bogged down in self-pity. I am going up to Conn. with her, to her brother's family, for Christmas day, and the rest of the week we are out nearly every night. The Stimson's have been wonderful in keeping in touch with me, and I had a chance to see Lake Mohonk while they were there, never having even known about it before. Jim had been there just the week before and they said he seemed fine. He has not returned to the church since moving to Hightstown and reports of his physical condition at the departure time say that he seemed more relaxed and looked better than in years, so he must be content and happy to be settled finally. Last week Mrs. Murch's husband died of a heart attack, and perhaps a month ago Mr. Barsness died suddenly, so there are two sad staff members this Christmas at Riverside. Mrs. Murch has been Laubach's secretary ever since he came, and Mrs. Barsness has been most effective in the education dept. I did not know that Mrs. Birk had died until I met Grace Robinson on the street about two weeks ago. I could not have forced myself to come up to the Chapel service, but I would have done something, I'm sure. I would like to have joined Norris, the Dickinsons, and the Brandenburgs for their 50th celebration, but that, too, was out for me.

How is all the above for a summary of my life and thought since we last met? Just about what you would expect, I am sure! I hope that you two stay well and are enjoying a good winter on the Cape, with expectations of having your family, one or two, with you for the holidays, or going to them. Anna and I have considered very seriously getting married, and if we both manage to survive the next year or two, I really expect that it will occur, and that we will settle somewhere in Calif. She can retire at 55 from the State Med-Soc. Welfare set-up and gets a good pension, and she feels sure that she can find another job of a like nature in Cal., until she is 65, so that all-in-all it promises a high degree of companionship and security for both of us. I am in the preliminary stages of getting my 83 year old aunt into a church home, and will sell the little Williamsburg house I have in Md., and reinvest it in a small house in Cal., where I can water the sand and grow cactuses.

Please remember that I will always be in your debt for the love and encouragement you have supplied me, and that my silence and neglect is often shame for a partially wasted life.

Did the library accept the books? I have never had a report from them about possible tax deduction. Love, to both, Dick